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The War on Tobacco is an All Hands Fight

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By Force Master Chief (FMF/SW/AW) Terry J. Prince, director of the Hospital Corps



In the war against tobacco, support your ship, shipmate and self. It's truly an all-hands fight.

A tobacco-free force is vital to the readiness and well-being of the entire Navy and Marine Corps team. Tobacco reduces the capability of our service members and detracts from overall resiliency.

Tobacco is also addictive and takes a serious toll on your health. Smoking, chewing, vaping or using hookah, isn't trendy or a good way to relieve stress. It troubles me that our Sailors and Marines continue to use tobacco products, despite the health risks.

I understand tobacco use is choice. Like other harmful choices, the choice to use tobacco may lead to the senseless and premature death of our shipmates, friends and family members.

If you're thinking about quitting tobacco, I urge you to see your primary care provider and take advantage of the available Navy Medicine resources. You don't have to do it alone. Let the smoking cessation professionals provide you with support and resources to set a quit date and go "cold turkey."

Our military is a reflection of society. As long as it's okay to use tobacco, we will attract tobacco users. Our challenge is over coming culture and choice. I advocate that the entire Navy and Marine Corps team commit to living healthier lives.

The New Year is just around the corner. Why not get a head start on your resolutions by focusing on your health today? Instead of smoking an entire pack, reduce it to half a pack or reach for a stick of gum instead. If you see a shipmate heading out for a dip or a smoke suggest going out for a walk or coffee together.

Don't limit yourself. There is no better time to incorporate other healthy lifestyle choices, such as drinking more water, getting fit, eating fruits and vegetables, taking up a new physical activity or practicing better sleep hygiene. I'm optimistic that a boosted culture of fitness is the path to becoming a tobacco-free force.

I quit tobacco 15 years ago. I went cold turkey by incorporating a combination of log entries and prayer, as well as relying on support from my friends. I also realized that going tobacco-free wasn't the only lifestyle change I needed to make. So, I started eating smart, going to the gym, and running.

I expect every Sailor and Marine to consider their choices wisely, and that includes the use of tobacco. In the war against tobacco, support your ship, shipmate and self. It's truly an all-hands fight.

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